

Request for Applications

Policy Academy for State and Local Policymakers *Improving Access to Mainstream Services for Persons Who Are Homeless*

PURPOSE: To support State and local executive, legislative, administrative, and private sector policymakers and other stakeholders in developing a coordinated State-level Action Plan that can be realistically implemented at the State and community levels **to improve access to mainstream health and human service programs by persons who are homeless.**

ELIGIBILITY: This request for applications (RFA) invites all States, U.S. Territories and the District of Columbia to develop a State Team application and apply for participation in a forthcoming policy academy.

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Submit Proposals by August 31, 2001 to:

Lynnette S. Araki, M.P.H.
Office of Planning, Evaluation and Legislation
Health Resources and Services Administration
Parklawn Bldg., Room 14-36
5600 Fishers Lane
Rockville, MD 20857
Phone: 301-443-6204
FAX: 301-443-9270
Email: Laraki@hrsa.gov

Policy Academy for State and Local Policymakers
Improving Access to Mainstream Services for Persons Who Are Homeless

sponsored by:

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Administration for Children and Families
The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services
(formerly the Health Care Financing Administration)
Health Resources and Services Administration
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
Office of Community Planning and Development
Office of Special Needs Assistance Programs

in partnership with:

American Public Human Services Association
Association of State and Territorial Health Officials
National Association of Alcohol and Substance Abuse Directors
National Association of County and City Health Officers
National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors
National Conference of State Legislators
National Governors Association
National Head Start Association
U.S. Conference of Mayors

Questions? Contact:

Lynnette S. Araki, M.P.H.
Office of Planning, Evaluation and Legislation
Health Resources and Services Administration
Phone: 301-443-6204
Email: Laraki@hrsa.gov

George Kanuck
Center for Substance Abuse Treatment
Substance Abuse and Mental Health
Services Administration
Phone: 301-443-8642
E-mail: Gkanuck@samhsa.gov

Policy Academy for State and Local Policymakers
Improving Access to Mainstream Services for Persons Who Are Homeless
Application Deadline: August 31, 2001

PROJECT OVERVIEW

States play a pivotal role in determining eligibility for accessing mainstream Federal and State-funded health and human services programs – including access to these programs by persons who are homeless.

In recognition of the essential role that States and communities play in determining access to mainstream health and human service mainstream programs for persons who are homeless, agencies within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development along with other national partners have joined together to sponsor this unique project – two regional Policy Academies for State and local policymakers.

OBJECTIVE OF POLICY ACADEMIES

The regional Policy Academies will provide a forum to bring State-level Teams comprised of individuals with policy-making influence together with nationally recognized faculty and facilitators who will assist the Teams to develop a State Action Plan. (See page 2 for a list of required and optional team members). The Policy Academies will also help to identify promising practices in States and communities that may assist others to address homelessness in expanded ways.

The first of the two planned Policy Academies will focus specifically on overcoming barriers to accessing mainstream services for homeless families with children. The second Policy Academy will focus on persons who are “chronically” homeless including persons with serious mental health and/or substance abuse problems.

During the Policy Academies, State Teams will participate in an interactive process to prepare a State Action Plan that identifies specific strategies for overcoming barriers to accessing mainstream programs by persons who are homeless.

Following participation in the regional Policy Academies, it is anticipated that State Teams will be eligible for follow-up technical assistance to help States in refining and implementing their State Action Plans. Technical assistance will focus on policies and services designed to improve access to mainstream services by persons who are homeless.

The Policy Academies will be followed by a National Conference where successful interventions and promising practices identified at the regional Policy Academies will be showcased. The purpose of the national meeting is to disseminate this important information to a broader national audience.

COMPETITIVE SELECTION PROCESS

State policymakers and local stakeholders from all States, U.S. Territories and the District of Columbia are invited to apply for participation in the Policy Academies. Six to eight State Teams will be selected to participate in each Policy Academy. **States should submit a separate application for each Policy Academy.** States at all stages of development regarding homeless assistance are encouraged to apply.

COST

Travel, hotel, meal expenses, and registration fees for up to ten (10) State Team Members will be covered by the Federal agency partners sponsoring these Policy Academies. Requests for team composition in excess of 10 team members will be considered. Additional team members will need to cover their own travel, hotel and per diem expenses and will be charged a nominal registration fee.

TENTATIVE DATES & LOCATIONS

States may apply to participate in more than one Policy Academy. **States should submit a separate application for each Policy Academy.**

Policy Academy #1: **November 27-28, 2001 in Sante Fe, New Mexico.** Focus: Homeless Families with Children.

Policy Academy #2: **February or March, 2002 in Philadelphia, PA.** Focus: Persons who are “chronically” homeless with an emphasis on persons with mental health and substance abuse issues.

PROPOSAL GUIDELINES AND CRITERIA

To apply for participation in a Policy Academy, States **must** submit a proposal that includes the following information:

- A letter of support signed by the Governor or the Governor’s designee;
- A list of all proposed State Team Members (see discussion on next page re: required and optional team members). Include each team member’s

name, title, agency/organization, address, phone and fax numbers, e-mail address, and *brief* paragraph explaining the rationale for each member’s participation on the team including how he/she can influence State-level policy development and change. Please also designate and identify a team member to serve as the Contact Person for further information on your application.

- Including local-level stakeholders as members of the Team (i.e. local legislators, city or county government representatives, county, or local homeless advocates) is encouraged (see discussion on next page of optional team members).
- A 3-5 page narrative that explains why the State is seeking to participate in the Policy Academy and to receive technical assistance. Please also address how the State expects to benefit from the Policy Academy.

Project staff will convene a selection committee to select 6-8 States to participate in each of the Policy Academies that will be held beginning in Fall 2001. A diverse selection committee will review the State applications and assist in the selection process. Applications will be reviewed based on the following criteria:

Clearly defined problem. (25 points)
Applicants must provide a narrative that identifies the existing challenges to improving access to and outcomes from mainstream health and human service programs for persons who are homeless. The first Academy will focus on homeless families with children, and the second Academy will focus on people who are chronically homeless, including issues of mental illness, substance abuse, and the co-occurrence of these problems.

Applicants should explain the current thinking on how to address barriers to accessing services including an overview of the State's vision, quantify current State investment and projected need for future investment, and identify the challenges in building support for the current vision. Applicants should make every effort to quantify current assistance-levels to homeless persons in their State (i.e., percent covered by Medicaid and S-CHIP, percent having private insurance, percent uninsured, etc.)

High-level commitment. (40 points) Applicants must provide compelling evidence that the State will benefit from the Policy Academy and follow-up technical assistance by: dedicating the staff time and resources necessary to participate in the Policy Academy; committing to at least one year of follow-up with the State Action Plan; and participating in a brief evaluation process with meeting sponsors or their agents.

Breadth, depth, and authority of proposed State Team. (35 points) Preference will be given to Applicants whose team composition consists of persons who can clearly demonstrate an ability to impact and implement State-level policy changes.

Required Team Members *shall* include: one senior-level representative from each of the following State agencies: Governor's office, Medicaid, TANF, mental health, substance abuse, State-level homeless services administrators or continuum-of-care contacts, and Head Start/State Collaboration Project Directors.

Optional Team Members *may* include, but are not limited to, representatives from: State legislatures, local county or city-level governments (e.g. mayor's offices and local legislators), S-CHIP, Head Start directors, primary care programs and providers, State- or local-level homeless advocates, representatives of Tribal organizations, managed care organizations, and/or others determined by the State as important stakeholders in policy

development impacting persons who are homeless.

Please include a cover letter with your application that clearly indicates:

- the State/Territory that is applying to participate in the Policy Academy(s) and,
- the name, title, agency, complete mailing address and phone and fax numbers of the person designated as the Team Member to be contacted for matters involving this application.

ACCEPTANCE ANNOUNCEMENT DATE

Project staff expect to notify State Teams who are selected to participate in the first Policy Academy by **October 2, 2001.**

BACKGROUND

The United States is about to enter its *third decade* of addressing the current homelessness problem. Our last era of homelessness of this scale was more than 60 years ago, during the Great Depression. Since the early 1980's, the 'dawn' of our current homelessness era, our response has been noteworthy. We have created an unprecedented array of homeless assistance programs, invented new modes of service delivery, and developed targeted housing programs—almost all of this created with earmarked homeless funding and run by specialized providers.

Consider a few facts:

- Each year, some 2 to 3 million people in America will experience at least 1 night of homelessness that brings them into contact with a specialized homeless assistance network.
- Poor people are five times more likely to experience homelessness as those who are not poor.
- During the 1990's, the U.S. Conference of Mayors reports that homeless families grew to represent nearly 40 percent of the users of homeless assistance.
- In some urban areas, poor minority children in families represent the largest group of persons at risk for homelessness.
- Over half of those who have an episode of homelessness recover quickly, often with their own resources, and have no further experience with the homeless assistance system.
- Poor persons with chronic illnesses are most likely to get 'stuck' in the homeless system. They consume nearly half of the resources we devote to homelessness while representing only about 10 to 15 percent of all those homeless.
- In the mid-1990's, 55 percent of homeless persons in a national survey reported having no health insurance.
- Homelessness is not cheap. A recent study published by FannieMae, estimated that it costs government programs around \$40,000 per person/per year in health and social service costs to "keep" a person with a psychiatric disability homeless, and virtually the same amount to house that individual and provide appropriate care and services.

Program officials at HUD and HHS believe that communities can be more effective in addressing homelessness *if they begin to do business in new ways*. We have learned this from innovations by States, providers, advocates and others. We heard this in feedback we received from a September, 2000 meeting: "Building Partnerships for Access to Health Care and Social Services for Persons Who Are Homeless" where we asked stakeholders to tell us about barriers and solutions to better uses of *multiple funding sources*.

Why “Multiple Funding Sources?”

Many States and cities now recognize that no single funding source or program will have the capacity or the energy to address the complex set of issues inherent in homelessness. There is also increasing recognition that mainstream health, social service, and housing programs for poor and at-risk persons need to be included in our thinking about responding to homelessness.

These Policy Academies are designed to help you think about new approaches, particularly approaches that blend expertise and resources from multiple contributors. They provide a forum where you can consider different approaches, dialogue with colleagues, and, if there is interest, to work toward a unified plan.

What Will Happen

Your response to homelessness, particularly the resources to address homelessness, is largely influenced by policy choices at the State level. Whether the State has a policy on affordable housing, how the State allocates its human service resources, choices made about eligibility to participate in a program, and the emphasis placed on coordination of services are only a few examples that can affect whether a person who is homeless has access to assistance.

The Academy will encourage your team to consider how current policies and program resources influence the response to homelessness. It will particularly encourage you to consider whether there are efficiencies or expansions in program operations that would improve the response. The Policy Academies will also provide you with an environment where you will have the opportunity to learn from your peers in other States.

If your team agrees to improve your current approach, the Academy will support a dialogue with your colleagues about whether and how you can make services more accessible for persons who experience homelessness. It will help you think through time frames, policies, resources, constituencies, and goals for a different approach. Working together, it is possible to think about ending the current era of homelessness.

We hope you will consider taking advantage of this important collaboration among HHS, HUD, and States.